

In the continuing effort to raise awareness of the impact and frequency of birth defects, the 2013 theme is "*Birth defects are common, costly, and critical.*" With that thought in mind, here are some interesting facts about birth defects as well as some valuable prevention strategies. Please take the time to check them out

Birth defects affect one in every 33 babies born in the United States and are a leading cause of infant mortality. Babies who survive and live with birth defects are at increased risk for developing many lifelong physical, cognitive, and social challenges. Medical care and support services only scrape the surface of the financial and emotional impact of living with birth defects.

The good news is awareness efforts offer hope for reducing the number of birth defects in the future. The following prevention strategies can be promoted. Please encourage all pregnant women and those who may become pregnant to:

- Consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily
- Manage chronic maternal illnesses such as diabetes, seizure disorders, or phenylketonuria (PKU)
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight
- Talk to a health care provider about taking any medications, both prescription and over-the-counter
- Avoid alcohol, smoking, and illicit drugs
- See a health care provider regularly
- Avoid toxic substances at work or at home
- Ensure protection against domestic violence
- Know their family history and seek reproductive genetic counseling, if appropriate

Some of our messages for 2013 are:

Every 4 ½ minutes, a baby is born with a birth defect. We want to help you reduce that risk.

January is Birth Defects Prevention Month ... but **any month** is the month to prevent birth defects.

Learn more about prevention, detection, treatment and living with birth defects at www.cdc.gov/birthdefects and www.nbdpn.org.

One in every 33 babies is born with a birth defect.

Birth defects affect us all. What effect will you have on birth defects?

Prevent birth defects ... Now is the time.

The yearly hospital costs for birth defects exceed 2.6 billion dollars.

One in every five infant deaths occurs due to birth defects.

Please see additional links for more information.